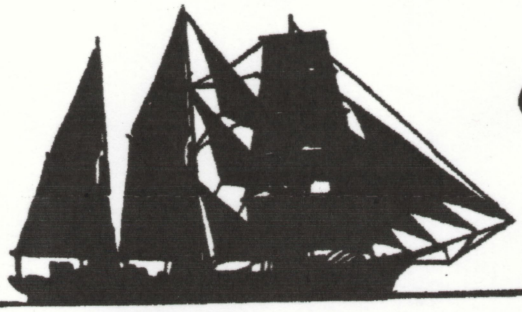

Searchlight: Ship to Shore News from M.V. Regina Maris

Vol.2, No.15
Little Bay Island, Notre Dame Bay

Monday, Aug.8, 1977

It is quiet and peaceful here in the saloon this morning. The mahogany panels and the chart table glow warm in the warm morning sun streaming in through the open door. The gentle westerly breeze will be fair when we sail. For now it brings the almost painfully sweet song of sparrows in the meadow ashore - a siren call urging us to linger in this Northern Harbor of Little Bay Island, one of the most beautiful gentle harbors in all of Newfoundland.

It is just over two years since Ann and I sailed in here for the first time and fell in love with the place. Somehow it seems to combine everything - gentle meadow on the south, steep cliffs on the north, with deep protected water in between. It even has a view of distant islands and open sea through its narrow entrance. Once people lived here, but the need for companionship, schools and paying jobs lured the last family away to the town on Southern Harbor 17 years ago. Now the meadows only tenants are a white horse and the song sparrows.

This time, in contrast to the complete privacy of our last visit, the eye catching qualities of *Regina* have brought many visitors from the town. By speed boat and long-liner they have come, warm, friendly, enormously hospitable, these are people whose lives and livelihood are completely involved with the sea. Small wonder they flock around to see the ship. Little Bay Island, like Fogo, resisted the resettlement movement and is an example of how things were and perhaps could be now in many "Outports". This is a prosperous year-round community of 400 people. Unemployment does not exist - those who don't fish and seal work in the packing plant. A ferry (twice a day in summer once a day in winter) provides contact with the mainland and carries the island's cars to wider highway systems than its two miles or so of roads. Boats and houses are well painted, the people dressed in coats and ties for Sunday are cheerful and forward looking - a marked contrast to the nostalgic longing of so many who, having bowed to the urging of the Smallwood government to move to larger communities in the early '60's now return each summer to their former homes to earn what they can fishing a too-short season because work is unattainable in their new home.

The only topic which brings raised voices and indignation is Greenpeace, and their campaign against sealing. These people are realists who can and do accept conservation measures as important necessities to protect the resources that support them. Not unexpectedly they resent being accused of cruel sadism because they pursue a traditional calling which provides needed food and income, especially when the accusation comes from the people who they see as the consumers of the product they are not supposed to harvest. THE picture of Brigette Bardot with a young harp seal (stuffed and bought for the occasion for $500 we are told) which appeared recently is a particular sore point.

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This week has been full of highlights. At St. Anthony we visited with two Norwegian trawlers and their crews. Both converted whale catchers, they were handsome ships, beautifully fitted out for shrimp fishing, their crews radiant with the kind of satisfaction which 200 tons of valuable shrimp (processed and packed aboard) brings to a fishing crew. Their gift of 60 lbs. of their product fed the whole crew twice. Best of all perhaps was our 36 hours in Williamsport--our home away from home in Newfoundland. Wes and Effie Randell, Pierce Caravan, and Ned Canning (at 71 he not only rows out to the fishing ground each day, but catches more than anyone else) made us welcome as always --- the kind of welcome which brought me back here for my fourth visit, and will continue to draw us to this austere and spectacular fjord in the future.

On the personal side, the whole crew was delighted and excited when director Bernie Goldhirsch and his wife, Wendy, and Stephen Clark joined us in St. Anthony for the sail to St. John. Evaluations of the program aboard, plans and suggestions for the future, and accounts of adventures recent and remote in sailing and in science fill the air. It is already a productive visit and will be even more so.

Dr. George Nichols, Jr.
Master, *Regina Maris*